

Macalester College  
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Old Main 318

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History 244-01/American Studies 294-03  
The U.S. Since 1945: The U.S. in the Vietnam War Era, 1950-1975

Wednesdays 7-10PM

Old Main 002

This is a course about “the long 1960s,” a period in which social movements confronting racism, sexism, inequality, and war interwove with new cultural formations, such as “rock and roll,” the Black Arts Movement, and Chicano and Asian-American Studies. No sooner had the Keynesian state, industrial unions, and their demand-driven economics taken hold in the post-World War II United States than a series of challenges arose – from a business leadership which was threatened by the new power of unions; a political establishment which was threatened by the power of the New Deal state and the left, particularly the Communist Party; Chicanos and African Americans who were unwilling to sit by as the Keynesian tide lifted all boats but theirs; women who were unwilling to settle for second class citizenship, from the workplace to the political arena to interpersonal relationships in the “private” arena; and young people who were unwilling to serve as cannon fodder for yet more wars and who came to question the very culture of consumerism that was underpinned by Keynesianism’s demand-driven economics. At key moments, these currents intermingled, sometimes undercutting each other, sometimes inciting each other; sometimes they threatened to meld into a movement which challenged the direction of U.S. society from top to bottom, from the margins to the center, and from the public sphere to the private sphere. These movements, their contexts, their roots, their courses, and their consequences, will be the focus of our course.

We will use a variety of readings and films, and we will listen to music and engage primary documents. Most nights, our work will include viewing a film, which will become part of the evening’s discussion. Most nights, I will lecture a bit, presenting historical context, analytical frameworks, adding material, and suggesting directions to explore. The core of our work, faithfully, will be discussion, both in small groups and in an assembly-of-the-whole. I am asking you to do a lot of reading, perhaps more than you can manage each week. It will be important that you share summaries of chapters with each other and/or that you develop skimming skills in reading, because the success of the course (and a significant component of your grade) will depend on your preparation to participate in weekly class discussions and your willingness to do so. Obviously, you must be present to participate in the discussion, and, since we meet only once a week, each class constitutes an entire week’s work. So, be here, and be ready to participate.

Warning: I rely on email for my primary communication with you, so please open and read as soon as possible the emails I send the class. You, too, can email the class. Write to: [Hist-244-01@lists.macalester.edu](mailto:Hist-244-01@lists.macalester.edu). Everyone registered for the class can send emails to us.

In addition to participation in class discussions, your grades will depend on:

- 1) An oral presentation, in which three students collaborate, taking no more than 15 minutes, to present the reading for the evening. This presentation will involve:
  - a) Emailing the class a set of discussion questions, no later than 6PM on the Tuesday evening before the class.
  - b) Providing a brief biographical sketch of the author
  - c) Summarizing the key themes, issues, insights of the reading
  - d) Discussing, briefly, how the reading has been assessed by critical reviewers.
- 2) Two short papers, each 2-3 pages, one in each half of the semester, in which you analyze one or more of the films, discuss some reviews of it, and connect it to the course readings.
- 3) One substantial paper, 8-10 pages in length, due during the exam period at the end of the semester. I will offer you multiple prompts for this paper, and I will also, of course, be available to discuss your development of an approach and an argument for this paper. It will not require research or reading beyond the assigned course materials.

I expect that our conversations will touch upon such difficult topics as race, racism, gender, sexism, sexuality, homophobia, and the like, and it will be important that we maintain a civil, respectful, and safe atmosphere in our discussions. I expect you to provide not only an active and intelligent voice to our conversations, but also a thoughtful and empathic ear to your colleagues' voices. I expect that, together, we will create a body of knowledge and understanding this semester that is greater than the sum of its parts. We will all benefit from everyone's contributions.

The following books are available for purchase at the college bookstore. They should also be available on two hour reserve at the Library:

George Lipsitz, A RAINBOW AT MIDNIGHT: CLASS AND CULTURE IN COLD WAR AMERICA

Ruth Feldstein, MOTHERHOOD IN BLACK AND WHITE

Ellen Schrecker, ed., THE AGE OF MCCARTHYISM

David Noble, FORCES OF PRODUCTION

Marilyn Young, VIETNAM WARS

Peniel Joseph, WAITING 'TIL THE MIDNIGHT HOUR

Sara Evans, PERSONAL POLITICS

Nancy Maclean, FREEDOM IS NOT ENOUGH

Carlos Munoz, YOUTH, IDENTITY, POWER: THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

Wini Breines, ed., TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

Weekly syllabus (subject to change)

- 9/8 Introduction to the course  
Film: "The House I Live In" (1945)  
Readings: Alan Petigny, "Two Great Myths About the 1950s"  
Nelson Lichtenstein, "From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and The Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era"  
Elaine Tyler May, "Cold War – Warm Hearth: Politics and the Family in Postwar America"  
George Sanchez, "'What's Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews': Creating Multiracialism on the Eastside during the 1950s"
- 9/9 Cultural outing – reduced ticket prices to see Carlyle Brown's new one-man piece set in 1968, "Therapy and Resistance," at Dreamland Arts, 677 Hamline Ave., 7:30PM curtain
- 9/15 Class, Gender, Race and Popular Culture  
Film: "Salt of the Earth"  
Reading: Lipsitz, A RAINBOW AT MIDNIGHT
- 9/22 The Cold War, McCarthyism, and U.S. Politics and Culture  
Film: "Scandalize My Name"  
Reading: Schrecker, THE AGE OF MCCARTHYISM
- 9/29 Work, Technology, Automation, and the Changing Dynamics of Class  
Film: "Nothing But a Man"  
Reading: Noble, FORCES OF PRODUCTION, Parts One and Two, chaps. 1-7
- 10/6 Work, Technology, Automation and the Changing Dynamics of Class  
Film: "At the River I Stand"  
Reading: Noble, FORCES OF PRODUCTION, Part Three, chaps. 8-11 and Epilogue
- 10/13 Race, Family, and Class: From the Public Sphere to the Private Sphere  
Film: "Killer of Sheep"  
Reading: Feldstein, MOTHERHOOD IN BLACK AND WHITE  
Breines, TAKING IT TO THE STREETS, pp. 387-403
- 10/20 The Vietnam War  
Film: "Hearts and Minds"  
Reading: Young, THE VIETNAM WARS, chaps. 1-8  
Breines, TAKING IT TO THE STREETS, pp. 153-201
- 10/25 First film paper is due, noon, History office

- 10/27 The Vietnam War  
 Film: ""Berkeley in the Sixties"  
 Reading: Young, THE VIETNAM WARS, chaps. 9-15 and Epilogue  
 Breines, TAKING IT TO THE STREETS, pp. 49-102; 331-352
- 11/3 Civil Rights and the Women's Movement  
 Film: "Freedom on My Mind"  
 Reading: Evans, PERSONAL POLITICS  
 Breines, TAKING IT TO THE STREETS, pp. 404-433
- 11/10 Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Arts Movement  
 Film: "Dutchman"  
 Reading: Joseph, WAITING 'TIL THE MIDNIGHT HOUR, Intro, chaps. 1-7  
 Breines, TAKING IT TO THE STREETS, pp. 13-48
- 11/17 Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Arts Movement  
 Film: "Finally Got the News"  
 Reading: Joseph, WAITING 'TIL THE MIDNIGHT HOUR, chaps. 8-11 and Epilogue  
 Breines, TAKING IT TO THE STREETS, pp. 103-134
- 11/24 From Black Power to Chicano and Asian-American Power  
 Film: "Black Panther and San Francisco State on Strike"  
 Reading: Munoz, YOUTH, IDENTITY, POWER: THE CHICANO MOVEMENT  
 Breines, TAKING IT TO THE STREETS, pp. 135-152
- 11/30 Second film paper is due, noon, History office
- 12/2 Class, Race, and Gender: Seeking Freedom, Seeking Equality  
 Film: "Norma Rae"  
 Reading: Maclean, FREEDOM IS NOT ENOUGH, Prologue, Parts I & II, chaps. 1-7  
 Breines, TAKING IT TO THE STREETS, pp. 434-464
- 12/9 Class, Race, and Gender: Seeking Freedom, Seeking Equality  
 Film: "Out at Work"  
 Reading: Maclean, FREEDOM IS NOT ENOUGH, Part III, chaps. 8-9  
 Breines, TAKING IT TO THE STREETS, pp. 493-507
- 12/14 Final paper due, noon, History office
- 12/16 Scheduled exam time to be announced – we might meet for a final discussion